

GREATER RUMANIA:

A STUDY IN NATIONAL IDEALS

BY
D. MITRANY

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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GREATER RUMANIA

THE main body of the Rumanian nation is constituted by a compact group of about twelve and a half million people. Of these only seven and a half million live in Rumania proper; the remainder inhabit neighbouring territories under Russian and Austro-Hungarian domination. Bessarabia numbers one million Rumanians, Bukovina a quarter of a million, and Hungary three and a half million. Bukovina was lost to Austria in 1775. Transylvania, Maramuresh, Crishana, and the Banat of Temesvár formed the kernel of the old Daco-Roman province of Dacia, but have belonged to Rumania only for a short time at the end of the sixteenth century, under the Voivode Michael the Brave. The Hungarian statistics of 1910 admit a number of 2,932,214 Rumanians for the whole region, maternal language serving as criterion for the division of the population on the basis of nationality. The census form contained the question: "What language do you use by preference?" Many non-Magyars, dependent in one way or another upon the goodwill of the authorities, were thus led to reply: "Hungarian." In the final returns, however, "language of preference" became "maternal language," and by also counting as Hungarians those

unable to speak—that is, the very small children and the dumb, as well as the considerable body of nomadic tziganes—the Hungarian authorities arrived at the result I have indicated. Even so, the Rumanians represent about one-half of the total population, whereas the Magyars contribute only 26·6 per cent. and the Saxons 10·8 per cent. While the Magyar and the Saxon elements predominate in the towns, the Rumanians show an overwhelming majority in 1,785 out of the 2,623 rural districts of Transylvania. The changes of population only tend to emphasise that situation. According to a German writer, E. Fischer, the Saxons lost during the last fifty years their preponderance in thirty-nine Transylvanian communes, the majority passing in thirty-eight cases to the Rumanians, and only in one case to the Magyars. That in itself should be sufficient justification for the Rumanian claims. What gives them an irresistible weight, however, and what has acquired for them the active support of the Allied Powers, is the arch iniquity of the political system of Hungary. The following pages shall do no more than sketch roughly the evolution of that system, for in this case to know is to condemn.

The question of priority of settlement in Transylvania is, in fact, irrelevant to the political problem now at issue. Yet since it has long ceased to be one of mere academic controversy, it may be well to point out that after the conquest of Dacia by the Romans the region which now

includes, broadly speaking, the provinces of Transylvania, Maramuresh, Crishana, and the Banat of Temesvár, had been intensively colonised with people of Latin stock. Gradually, under the pressure of the barbarian invaders who swept over the Hungarian and Rumanian plains coming from north and east, the Daco-Roman population clustered in a compact group in the Transylvanian highlands, living in small duchies within the shelter of the Carpathians. This comparative isolation enabled them to preserve and strengthen their national characteristics, and to transmit them unimpaired to the communities which sprang up east and west, and north and south, when times were safe once more. Ever since, Transylvania has remained for the Rumanian people an inexhaustible source of national vitality. At the beginning of the eleventh century some of the Rumanian duchies were subdued by the Magyars, who had settled on the Hungarian plains towards the end of the ninth century ; yet the "land of the Vlaks," in the south-eastern corner of Transylvania, continued to enjoy a certain degree of national autonomy. On the whole, the customs, institutions, and religion of the Rumanians were respected. As in other similar cases, the more warlike new-comers allowed themselves to be influenced by the more civilised native population. The Magyars adopted Latin for their official language, copied many institutions and customs of the Daco-Romans, and also

recruited a large number of their nobles from among the Rumanian nobility, which was already established on a feudal basis, and allied by community of interest to the Magyar feudal lords. The resultant economic oppression was accentuated during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the ruthless proselytism pursued by the Catholic Magyars among the Orthodox Rumanians. Those of the Rumanian nobles and freemen who had refused to become the confederates of the new masters were now driven by religious intolerance across the mountains, and there founded the two Rumanian principalities of "Muntenia" (commonly known as Wallachia) and "Moldavia." Though again occupying the area once covered by the old Roman province of Dacia, the Rumanian people thus found itself split politically into three independent groups. The following four centuries saw Moldavia and Wallachia engaged in a ceaseless struggle for life against the oncoming Turks, Tatars, Poles, and Magyars. As a consequence, their rulers could pay no heed to the sufferings of the Rumanians in the Hungarian lands who, being deprived by the emigration of their nobles of all moral and political support, fell in time into servitude. Many a time did the peasantry rise in an attempt to ease the pressure of the economic despotism and the religious intolerance of the Magyars; but the uneducated masses lacked experienced leadership, and, above all, the impetus of some unifying

sentiment which should speed their efforts to victory. The remedy for the latter deficiency was to arise from a development in the organisation of the Rumanian Church in Hungary.

THE SEED OF RUMANIAN NATIONALITY

Under the pious efforts of the Emperor Leopold I. part of the Rumanian Church was induced to recognise the supremacy of Rome, but was allowed to retain its married clergy and vernacular rites, and thus the Uniate Church came into being. Freed now from the degrading bondage to which they had been subjected hitherto, many young priests wandered to Rome during the first half of the eighteenth century to complete in the papal city their religious education. The religion they were destined to glean there was that of nationality. The sudden contact with Latin civilisation, the language they heard all round them, the sight of Trajan's column—the reliefs of which spoke to them of the ancestral glory they had long forgotten—all united in making them alive to what was almost a revelation: that the Rumanian language was a Latin language; that all those broken masses speaking Rumanian were, in fact, one and the same people of common Latin origin. The seed out of which Rumanian nationality was to mature was sown and the inevitable union of all Rumanians was heralded. In the town of Blaj, in Transylvania, there sprang up a teaching centre where the Rumanian language was

born anew, and from which went out in spirited speech and writing the call of the new national ideal. It was answered in 1784. In that year the Rumanians rose once more against their oppressors ; but for the first time, and differing in that from similar peasant risings in other European countries, the movement was as much national as economic in character. "Let the Hungarians go to their Hungarian lands, and leave the Rumanian soil to the Rumanians," clamoured the peasants. But the Magyars remained, and they had the peasant leaders—Horia, Closhca, and Crishan—broken on the wheel. The current started by a few intellectuals was now not to be stemmed, however. The many well-founded grievances which the Rumanians had against their masters gave a sense of tragic reality to that new incentive to independence, kept alive and fomented by the increasing ruthlessness of the Magyars.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century this national revival approached its ideal consummation when it spread to Moldavia and Wallachia, in which Turkish turpitude and Greek venality were achieving the material and spiritual ruin of the population. In churches, schools, and salons Greek was the ruling language ; even where Rumanian was still written its Latin character was hidden under the heavy cloak of the Cyrillic (Slav) alphabet. Everything was foreign and forced. A wave of enthusiasm greeted, therefore, the foundation of the first national school in

Bucarest in 1817, by the Transylvanian teacher Lazar. Here at last was a refuge for the languishing national spirit. Here at last the young generation could satisfy its craving for something free of alien adulteration. The school became a place of pilgrimage ; acting as a powerful ferment it conduced to the creation of a national Press and, in 1827, to the foundation, by Heliade Rădulescu, of the Society for the Propagation of the National Ideal, which aimed at the establishment of schools, of printing offices, and of a national theatre.

There is something touching in the very vagaries associated with that renaissance, as the epidemic of Latinised christian names—Augustus, Demetrius, Titus, Aurelius, and others—which raged especially in Transylvania, or the fanciful scholarship of the historians of the time, who began their tale with Romulus and Remus, and, contemptuous of earlier developments, dated their narrative from the foundation of Rome. It is worthy of notice that the new schools established in Wallachia in 1834 appealed to Transylvania for teachers, and that the newly founded Rumanian Society of Literature entrusted a Transylvanian, Laurian, with the compilation of its first dictionary in 1860. Just as she had been the origin of those elements which founded in the late Middle Ages the two provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia—that is, present-day Rumania—so now again Transylvania was the source of those idealistic forces which roused all Rumanians to the con-

sciousness of their common origin, language, and character, and knitted the fragments into one close nation, free spiritually, and of necessity to be free politically.

At the summons of the national song, "Wake up, Rumanian, from your Sleep of Death," written by the Transylvanian poet Muresheanu a few years before, and the more cherished for being prohibited in Hungary, the Rumanians joined everywhere in the general revolutionary movement of 1848. In Moldavia and Wallachia the rising was easily suppressed by the joint action of the forces of suzerain Turkey and protecting Russia. In Hungary the Magyars had taken up arms against Austria and given themselves an independent constitution which incorporated with Hungary the Principality of Transylvania, but they refused in their infatuated enmity to recognise even the existence of Rumanian nationality. Transylvania had been directly attached to the Austrian crown since the Treaty of Carlowitz (1699), with a measure of local autonomy. Confronted with the uncompromising attitude of the Magyars, the Rumanians assembled 40,000 strong outside the town of Blaj (Blasendorf), proclaimed their allegiance to the Austrian crown, refused to accept the legalised despotism of the Magyars, and each and all of them took the oath "to defend our Rumanian language and rights, to defend liberty, equality, and fraternity; in accordance with these principles to respect the nationality of

all the inhabitants of Transylvania, claiming from them equal respect for my own nationality. I will not attempt to dominate anybody and will not suffer myself to be dominated by anybody." The racial war which ensued was fought out bitterly. Finally defeated by the intervention of Russian troops, Hungary had once more to accept Austrian rule, and in so far as the Magyars lost their predominant position the subject-peoples came again into their own. In 1863 the Rumanians were able to secure, with the support of Vienna, linguistic privileges and a political status equal to those of the Magyars, Szeklers, and Saxons. But that beneficent era came abruptly to an end in 1867, when the defeat at Königgrätz forced Austria to give way to Hungarian demands for independence. With the establishment of the Dual Monarchy the privileges acquired during the preceding few years were repudiated as unconstitutional, and Transylvania was proclaimed an integral part of Hungary. Freed from the restraining control of Vienna, the Magyars now gave full play to their political methods in order to achieve their fantastically impossible and brutally egotistic ideal of a unitary Magyar State. Seemingly, they were guided by the principle that what was not Magyar ought to be, and that what could not be Magyar must disappear.

HUNGARIAN TYRANNY

To describe in any detail the constitutional life of Hungary during the last half of a century

would amount to writing a theoretical treatise on political corruption. The facts have been sufficiently and irrefutably established by many investigators. One need only mention the well-known English writer, Dr. R. W. Seton-Watson, whose evidence is the more damning as he declares himself that "I approached the subject with the conventional views of a British admirer of Louis Kossuth, and have gradually and reluctantly revised my opinion on almost every problem of Austrian and Hungarian politics." In order to break the spirited resistance of the Rumanians the Magyars endeavoured, above all, to thwart their corporate life. Of the right of meeting and association the Rumanians of Transylvania are, in fact, deprived. Even literary and artistic societies fail generally to obtain the necessary authorisation, as has been the case with the literary society of the students of Cluj (Klausenburg), and with several musical societies in the Banat. Of course, the greatest opportunity for Magyarisation lay in the field of education. To that end numerous infant schools were set on foot, attendance at which was compulsory upon all children between the ages of three and five. The function of attendance-officer is fulfilled zealously by the village gendarme. The children's education is continued in the so-called State schools, in which all teaching is given in Hungarian and by Hungarians. True enough, attendance at those schools is not compulsory. But as the great

majority of the Rumanian communities have been unable to support schools without State assistance, the parents have had to choose between ignorance or Magyarisation for their children. The fact that the Rumanian villages show a proportionately high percentage of illiterates is, in these circumstances, actually to their credit, and that one can state it in this way is indicative of the tragedy of their position. Nevertheless, by considerable sacrifices, they had been able to bring the number of Rumanian elementary schools to nearly 3,300 by 1905; but two years later the so-called Apponyi Law was passed which provided for the closing of those Rumanian schools in which the teaching of Hungarian was "insufficient." By means of such conveniently loose wording—characteristic of Hungarian legislation—hundreds of Rumanian schools were closed without being replaced. "I hope that Magyarisation will make better headway henceforward," said the late Emperor to Apponyi, when signifying his assent to the Bill. As to higher education, it will be sufficient to state that for a population of three and a half million Rumanians the Hungarian authorities have not allowed the establishment of more than five secondary schools.

The use of the Rumanian language in religious services, even in the Uniate churches, has naturally been of considerable value for the strengthening of Rumanian nationality. The following instance, quoted from a survey of Magyar abuses, will

indicate the way in which ecclesiastic organisation is dealt with in Hungary :—"Notwithstanding the united protest of all the Rumanians of Hungary, part of the Uniate Church was recently placed by decree within the jurisdiction of a Hungarian bishopric, created for the purpose at Hajdú Dorog. The services were to be conducted in Hungarian, and the ministers were chosen from among the most active supporters of the policy of Magyarisation. A Papal Bull of June 8, 1912, ratified this new offence. As a consequence, eighty parishes were forcibly cut away from the Uniate Church. The action found its consummation in a monster trial at Szatmár, which resulted in a large number of those who had raised their voice in protest being sent to prison."

LÈSE-MAGYARISME

The Press, one of the channels by means of which the Rumanians could voice their grievances, has been muzzled by the introduction of a special law. During the last twenty years more than one hundred years' imprisonment and 250,000 francs in fines have been dealt out to Rumanian journalists for Press offences. The reader will probably ask himself: Why did the Rumanians not attempt to improve their lot by constitutional methods, since there is a Parliament in Budapest? It may be well to explain, therefore, that by a series of enactments the Hungarian Government have succeeded in defrauding the Transylvanians

of almost all electoral privileges. The latest of these patriotic contrivances is the law passed by Tisza in 1913, which restricted the vote to those able to read and write, ability to be ascertained by commissions composed of Hungarian officials. To commit any mistake involves almost certain disqualification for a Rumanian elector. The vote being public, it can easily be understood that freedom of opinion is a myth for those connected with official institutions. Moreover, the authorities do not hesitate to employ any unlawful means in order to secure the election of the official candidates. That "a Transylvanian election is nothing less than civil war" seems to find support in the fact that, on the admission of the Hungarian Government, "only" 194 battalions of infantry and 114 squadrons of cavalry were needed at the elections of 1910 to "preserve order." Proportionately, the Rumanians ought to have eighty representatives in Parliament; in 1910 they succeeded in securing five seats. When in 1892 the committee of the Rumanian National Party embodied their grievances in a petition to the throne, the Hungarian Government not only prevented the Emperor from receiving the deputation, but actually had its members sentenced to long terms of imprisonment for having plotted against the unity of the Magyar State. It has been well said that Hungarian law has evolved a new offence, unique of its kind—the crime of *lèse-magyarisme*.

While it is manifest that such a situation cannot endure, the fact that it has been brought about deliberately, in pursuance of a goal which is the golden dream of most Hungarian statesmen, bars all hope to betterment from within. This is evidenced by the complete failure of the negotiations which took place early in 1914 between the Hungarian Prime Minister, Tisza, and a specially elected Rumanian committee of three. The demands put forward by the Rumanians can be summarised in one word—equality. They were offered nothing but vague assurances, the Government adhering to their past policy of reducing, as the Austrian writer Treumund puts it, all “non-Magyars to second-rate citizens.” One might have expected the war to work a change upon the strange mentality of the Hungarian politicians; indeed, proposals for electoral reform were placed before the Hungarian Parliament at the beginning of this year. We are enlightened as to their nature by the following comment, one among many similar offered by the Hungarian Press:—“The old world is trying to give birth to a new world. . . . The Beduins aspire to national self-government. . . . It is the glory of Tisza that he is the last apostle of an unmodified economic and political system, that he is the last representative of legitimate internal oppression.” (*Világ*, February 9, 1917.)

The long-suffering nationalities of Austria-Hungary had one avowed friend in the person of

the late Archduke Francis Ferdinand. The dagger which stupidly slew him also cut the last constitutional link which tied the subject-races to the Dual Monarchy. Henceforward they had to seek salvation in their own strength, and in the help which is due to them from their more fortunate brethren across the frontiers. Conditions arising out of her international position, and anxiety not to compromise the country's internal development by friction with the neighbouring State, had led Rumania to discourage nationalist tendencies in the past. In 1883 she even entered upon an alliance with Austria-Hungary. But that she neither could nor intended to renounce her national ideal was clearly stated by the late King Carol in the very same year. "No nation," he said, "consents to be bereaved of its political aspirations, and those of the Rumanians are constantly kept at fever heat by Magyar oppression. But this is no real obstacle to a friendly understanding between the two neighbouring States." The alliance was a compact by which Rumania agreed to shelve for the time being her legitimate claims in return for unhampered security in her own development. Two circumstances, however, different in character but alike in their effect, were actively achieving the breakdown of that compromise. While rapid progress was rendering Rumania more independent in her external relations, the Transylvanian question was looming ever larger, Vienna being unwilling or unable to

restrain the growing excesses of Magyar jingoism. Moreover, the foreign policy of Austria-Hungary, economically and politically aggressive, made a real understanding impossible. During the period from 1883 to 1913 Rumania had no diplomatic conflict of any consequence except with her ally, Austria-Hungary. This country's uncandid attitude found final expression in 1913 in the second Balkan War, avowedly engineered by Austria and adverse to the most vital interests of the Rumanian State. It must be granted that in so acting Austria only followed the dictates of an inexorable fate. No artificial barrier can ward off the final fusion of Serbs with Serbs, and of Rumanians with Rumanians. Lest that evolution should centre in independent Serbia and Rumania, and be consummated outside the frontiers of the Dual Monarchy, the descendants of Metternich stirred up the fray in the hope of coming out of it as masters now of Serbia, later of Rumania. Not wanting to free her own subjects, Austria had to aim at enslaving their kindred across the frontiers. So flagrant was the situation that in a conversation which took place earlier in the war between the Austrian Minister at Bucarest, Count Czernin, now Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, and M. Take Ionescu, the former exclaimed bluntly: "You will go to war with us. That is an understood thing. It is both your interest and your duty."

What an Austrian could perceive, no Rumanian

might overlook. Speaking long ago on the Transylvanian question, the late Ioan Brătianu said : "When there are squabbles in the house of my brother-in-law it is no affair of mine ; but when he raises a knife against his wife it is not merely my right to intervene—it is my duty." Since then the sufferings of the Rumanians of Austria-Hungary have grown apace. It was hence Rumania's unquestionable duty to do her utmost, as soon as opportunity arose, to free those unfortunate martyrs from their chains. Transylvania must be made independent of Austria-Hungary. That being so, what can be more just than that she should be united to Rumania ? For not only are the inhabitants of the two regions alike in their nature and united in their aspirations, but the Transylvanians can advance the further claim of having created of their own blood, and fed of their own spirit, that part of the Rumanian nation which, being further from the Magyars, has been able the earlier to join the community of independent and more advanced European States. It is difficult to conceive a cause more legitimate than that of the Rumanian nation, whether one considers it from the racial, historical, political, or simply from the human point of view.

There are, moreover, considerations of general import which make it imperative to solve the Transylvanian question in the sense defined by the Allies' reply to President Wilson. All who have studied the history of south-eastern Europe

agree upon the point that the condition *sine qua non* for the pacification of that region is the removal of the artificial national frontiers. The pre-war situation was so profoundly illogical in itself that it could not be defended on any ground whatsoever. That is far from being its most serious defect, however. South-eastern Europe is not unjustly considered a hotbed of disorder. Yet it is exactly that arbitrary racial division which is the ultimate cause of the constant restlessness prevailing in the region, and diplomacy has cultivated and exploited it as a source of opportunities for its own particular quarrels. As a consequence, the development of all the countries concerned has been retarded, firstly, because they were involved in unending feuds; and, secondly, because the prominence of external problems enabled their oligarchic Governments to divert popular attention from much-needed internal reforms. The present conflict has emphasised the fact that no country can afford to ignore events and conditions which disturb the tranquillity of another. If there be anyone so impervious to principles of general justice as to deny the righteousness of the Rumanian case, let him at least consider the dangers accruing to his own country—indeed, to the world at large—from that misuse of power on the part of the stronger peoples which results in the obstruction of the natural development of the weaker.

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